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# The Baseball Conspiracy

By Seymour Joseph

When CIA chief Richard Helms walked into President Nixon's office he found the Chief Executive pacing the floor, wearing an infielder's glove and pounding a baseball into it.

"You sent for me, sir?" asked Helms.

"Okay, Helms, let's have it," demanded the President.

"Let's have what, sir?"

"This business about the baseball strike. Why wasn't I briefed on it?"

"I don't understand, Mr. President, what kind of briefing you expect from me on the baseball strike. I..."

"Come on, Helms," insisted Mr. Nixon, "don't play coy with me. I want to know how those ball players are tied in with the VC."

"VC, sir?"

"Vietcong, Mr. Helms, Vietcong!"

"But to my knowledge there is no tie-in."

Nixon stopped pacing and brought his nose threateningly close to Helms'.

"Mister Helms, do you know what's been going on for the past several weeks in Vietnam?"

"Of course I do, sir."

"There's been an offensive going on, that's what's been going on! And do you know why the VC launched that offensive, Mister Helms?"

"We presented our reports to you, Mr. President, and we..."

"They launched it to embarrass us, that's why. Then when we started bombing the North again they knew everybody

would say, 'Here we go again, and President Nixon said he was winding it down.'"

"I don't see how that..."

"You didn't see where or when the assault would be made, either. All you fellows told us three months ago was to watch out for a biggie in Vietnam. We asked you where it would come from and you gave us the wrong place. We asked you when and you gave us the wrong time. Now you tell me you didn't even know there was a tie-in with the baseball strike!"

Helms was visibly shaken. He wanted to sit, but didn't dare.

"I still don't see the tie-in, Mr. President," he said in a choked voice. "Perhaps if you'd indicate..."

"Helms," began the President, placing his hand on Helms' shoulder, "have you ever heard of a baseball strike before in the United States of America?"

"No, sir, I haven't."

"Did you ever think it was possible?"

"No, sir, I didn't."

"Our national pastime, Helms, our national pastime! Legend has it that it's spring when the groundhog leaves his hole. But that's not so, Helms. In the United States of America it's spring when ball players all over this great country of ours leave their dugouts and head out onto that field! That's the sign for Americans to leave their cares, to forget their woes, and to get involved in the old ball game."

"Yes, sir," said Helms, "but I still don't see..."

"Hasn't it occurred to you the VC at-

tack and the baseball strike happened at the same time?"

"But I..."

"And that if you wanted to make sure there were no distractions to your attention getting device..."

"Yes, that's..."

"And if you wanted to undermine the spirit, stab the nerve center of this, the greatest nation on the face of the earth, what would you do?"

Helms stared at the President.

"What would I do, sir?"

"You'd stop baseball, that's what you'd do!" said Mr. Nixon, slamming the ball into his glove.

Richard Helms tried to speak, but only a phlegmy wheeze came out. He cleared his throat.

"But how did they do that, sir?" he asked slowly.

"Why do you think I got you in here?" shouted Mr. Nixon. "I want you to tell me how they did it. That's what you're getting paid for! Now I want you to get your men busy and find out all about this business. Check out that exhibition trip to Japan after last season. See if any of the boys took a side trip to Hanoi. Things like that. And let me know quick! No matter what happens in Vietnam, we can't let 'em get away with this strike!"

"Yes, sir," said Helms, starting for the door.

"And Helms!" the President called out. "Find out if that move by the Washington Senators to Texas was part of this scheme. Where the hell am I going to throw out this ball?"